

## The gordian knot of ethno-religious nationalism: Unsettled national questions and contested visions

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### Abstrak

The early twenty-first century has witnessed a rising number of global crises. These include climate change, widening income inequality, military and nuclear tensions between the major powers, repeated outbreaks of global pandemics, and an ongoing democratic recession. In particular, the deepening democratic recession has afflicted ostensibly both mature and newer democracies – contradicting theories of political development. In many countries, the political alliance between ethno- and religious nationalists has reignited assaults against democratic institutions, processes, and norms. This comparative country-case study, principally of Malaysia and the United States of America (US), explores the alliance between ethno- and religious nationalists by examining the forces and factors that have contributed to this combustible dynamic within the context of unsettled national questions, contested constitutional orders, and foundational national visions. Also examined are the narratives of fear, victimhood and privilege that have galvanised religious and ‘sons of the soil’ ethno-nationalists in resisting the building of inclusive multiracial democracies.